

For Christopher Marlowe: 1564 -- 1964

I miss the Thames, roast beef and ale,
the smell of ink, grease paint, the rose
on the lips of lovers forever pale --
ghosts now like me. Where? God only knows.

Tell me again, rare Ben, what news?
Does anybody drink to my sightless eyes,
the critics applaud, the public excuse
my views on God, the boys and spies?

Do they still hold forth at the Mermaid, Ben,
comparing their plays, toasting crafty Bess?
Hear you my name between port and roast hen?
How fares my Jew at the Globe, more or less?

I hold no grudge for this fellow Shakespeare
or care if his Hamlet my Edward eclipse;
granted my Tamburlaine broke ground for Lear --
my Helen launched more poets than ships.

I chose the tavern while Will reaped hay;
no tears in his ale when Faustus called to me.
My pact with Raleigh was reckless you say,
but who can thwart cast destiny?

I forgive Tom Kyd; Greene's wit stings no more.
Mayhap with a bedded wife or a faithful whore,
I'd have seen more stars decline,
but fate called my curtain at twenty-nine!

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